WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 SEPTEMBER 1997

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

KAREN'S COLUMN
BIDS DUE, WALLPAPER REMOVED, CHURCH GROUP SCRAPES, PAINTS FENCE OF MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET

As it always does, the summer has flown by too quickly. For the Historical Society and the Museum on Main Street, the summer was filled with activity relating to our Michigan Department of State Historic Preservation Grant.

Plans and specifications prepared by Quinn Evans/ Architects, were sent to Lansing for approval. An agreement between MDOS and WCHS, covering the terms of the grant, was drawn up and signed.

Photo by Karen O'Neal

Kent Meldrum (standing) led church volunteers in painting fence.

At the end of July we were authorized to go ahead and obtain bids on the work to be done. According to our agreement, all work must be competitively bid through the Washtenaw County Purchasing Manager, Mr. Robert Devault. We are now formally "Request for Proposal #5649."

A pre-bid "walk-through" was held August 19. Several interested contractors attended. A number of bid documents have been distributed to date by the County.

We hope this interest in our project will result in some good proposals. Bids are due September 4. They will be reviewed by us and by the State before an award is made. The work is to be completed by the end of December.

Stanton McManus spent five days removing many layers of wallpaper from the entry hall and stairwell--a tough job! The plaster underneath is pretty much intact. We will be able to preserve most of the original plaster in this area.

A group of volunteers from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, under the leadership of Kent Meldrum, scraped and painted the portion of the fence along Main Street.

They were doing community service to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the arrival at the Great Salt Lake of Brigham Young and the Mormon pioneers.

Karen O'Neal, 665-2242.

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM: HOW TO TELL IF ANTIQUE FAKE, FRAUD, OR GENUINE

A specialist in the restoration of antique furniture will speak on "Fake, Fraud or Genuine" at the first WCHS meeting of the 1997-98 season, Sunday, September 21.

She is Cathy Andrews, owner of Andrews Restoration in Saline. She will discuss the history and evolution of furniture styles. She will give resources and clues to use to identify authentic antique furniture.

The meeting will be at 2 p.m. at Andrews Restoration, 789 West Michigan Avenue, Saline. She will illustrate her presentation with examples in her workshop.

Directions: Take Ann Arbor-Saline Road to Saline. Turn right (west) on Michigan Avenue 7/10ths mile to 789. The workshop is located behind the Marathon Service Station and Car Wash. The workshop telephone is 429-0808.

The program is open to the public free of charge. Refreshments will be served.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT HISTORY LANE DURING HOLIDAY SEASON

Last year, History Lane was only open evenings and weekends. Many shoppers at Briarwood expressed disappointment that they were not able to view our display of Victorian artifacts and photographs.

This year, we have been requested to keep History Lane open during the full mall hours, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., and we are planning to do so.

In next month's *Impressions*, we will have a form for sign-up for volunteers. We plan to schedule four-hour stints. We hope many of our members will help us out.

WCHS AGAIN INVITED TO DO HISTORY LANE EXHIBIT AT BRIARWOOD MALL

Briarwood Management has invited both our Historical Society and the Ypsilanti Historical Society to do History Lane again from Thanksgiving through the Christmas holiday.

Last season, History Lane was very well-received by Briarwood shoppers. In being invited back this year, we sought a special item to feature in our Museum Shop.

In the mid-1970s, Ann Arbor Federal Savings, under the direction of Hazel Proctor, published a book, *Old Ann Arbor Town*, and in the 1980s, published a Second Edition.

The books featured old photographs of our town. Some people have asked whether these books would ever be reprinted.

The WCHS chose a committee to look into republishing these books. The committee members are: Pauline Walters, chair; Ina Hanel-Gerdenich, Judy Chrisman, Tom Nanzig and Jay Snyder.

We presented our idea to Hazel Proctor, past president of WCHS and a Life Member, and the original producer of the books and asked her advice on how to go about advancing our project.

Hazel Proctor is currently the chairman of Proctor Publications and has a good track record of book publication.

She replied with a letter stating that Proctor Publications, after the Book Committee had assembled photographs, wrote copy, and prepared a prototype of the book, would donate their services to prepare the book for publication.

However, the WCHS would need to find the money for the cost of printing. We decided that we would look for funds to print 2,000 copies.

Happily, when we presented our project to Mr. Ted Schwartz, General Manager of Briarwood, he, in conjunction with the Ann Arbor News, donated the necessary $9,000; $4,500 each.

The Committee is hard at work selecting photos, planning chapters, and plans to have the book, *Ann Arbor Revisited*, published and ready for sale by the opening of History Lane at Thanksgiving.

Additional persons now involved with the committee are: Grace Shackman, Louisa Pieper, and Susan Wineberg. Watch for further information.

WCHS 1997 BUS TOUR:
SHUN-PIKING TO JACKSON VIA SCIO CHURCH, BROOKLYN, HANOVER

The first stop on WCHS's 1997 bus tour focused on Washtenaw's early German settlers. It was a tour of Salem Lutheran Church and Cemetery on Scio Church Road west of Ann Arbor in the middle of the county where a lot of Germans settled.

"There were small German settlements elsewhere in the county but, by far, the majority settled out there," Ina Hanel, WCHS Vice-president who planned and guided the trip, said.

"I have a couple of descriptions of the German settlement in western Washtenaw County by German travelers who visited the area."

In 1835 Karl Neidhard wrote, "The settlement of the Germans [in Washtenaw County], for the most part Swabians from the neighborhood of Stuttgart, is located on the southeastern slope of these hills. Approximately sixty families are living here, only short distances apart, and each family owns from 160 to 240 acres of land."

Ina was puzzled by what he meant by "these hills" but after driving up and down Scio Church Road noted that at Wagner Road we can look down a little and at Zeeb Road we are coming up a bit of a slope that was created by the glaciers.

"If you imagine yourself walking you can see you are coming up over this hill down into this valley. At Zeeb Road if you look straight ahead on Scio Church Road you can see the church tower in the distance," Ina said.

In 1855 the second traveler, Johan Georg Kohl wrote, "We passed the district school, by itself in a lonely stretch of forest. A few more miles and we saw the church, also located in a remote place. We came to the shoemaker's modest dwelling and then the tailor's. We were crossing a village that was spread out as if viewed through a microscope, all intervals greatly increased."

Ina said that when the first settlers came to Washtenaw County obviously their first concern was to shelter and establish themselves but shortly thereafter they wanted to set up a means of worship.

"They met in each others' homes or schoolhouses at first. Then circuit riders started coming, especially of the Methodist Church. So a minister would come on a regular basis and give a sermon.

"The religions that first established themselves were Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian and Presbyterian.

"The Lutheran or German Church was established in Michigan by Pastor Friedrich Schmid who came here from Germany in 1833 at the request of some local German settlers.

"We are going to visit his 'home church' so to speak, from 1833 to 1849 when he moved into Ann Arbor. He still maintained his position at Salem Lutheran Church until 1857 when he retired."

Before reaching the church Ina called attention to the old George Aprill home on the left (south) and an old Italianate-style brick upright and wing house on the right.

Photo by Alice Ziegler

Ella Sharp Museum, Jackson, Michigan

SCIO CHURCH

Then tourgoers gathered in the church to hear Rob Steward tell about Pastor Schmid.

"Friedrich Schmid was born in Waldorf, Wurttemberg, Germany, a little bit south of Stuttgart, in 1807. His father was a blacksmith and he was trained in that craft but he had a yearning to become a pastor so he was sent off to the Basel Mission Institute, just across the border in Switzerland. There he trained from 1828 to 1833.

"The first German immigrants in Washtenaw County came in the late 1820s--the Schillings, Daniel Allmendinger, the Manns. By 1833 there were enough Germans in the county , mainly west of Ann Arbor in Lodi Township, to call a pastor.

"Mann was an uncle of an instructor in the Basel Mission Institute so he wrote there.

"The man they chose to send was a fortuitous choice. Trained as a blacksmith, he was physically fit, well-equipped for what he would do here which was be a circuit rider, although for the first six years he was walking--he didn't have a horse.

"The journey from Europe took ten weeks by sailboat. He arrived in New York in July. Then he took the Erie Canal and wagons and boat to Detroit. He arrived in Detroit August 16,1833.

"Word spread in Detroit that he was coming. They didn't have a pastor either so on Sunday, August 18, he preached the first Protestant German sermon in Michigan.

"He stayed in Detroit four days, then walked to Ann Arbor. It took him about 15-17 hours.

"In Ann Arbor he stayed with the Johann Heinrich Mann family. The next Sunday he preached his first sermon in Washtenaw in a schoolhouse four miles west of town on the Territorial Road. The second Sunday they organized the First German Evangelical Society of Scio and trustees were appointed.

"They officially organized the congregation September 11 and proceeded to build a church which they called Zion. It was built in what is now Bethlehem Cemetery.

"In 1923, on the 90th anniversary, a stone marker was placed in the cemetery showing where the original church had been. The church was built in a month, starting in November. It cost $265.32. The first services were held in it in mid-December.

"The early Germans who came here were not rich people. Offerings the first year totaled $13. The building cost was a big amount at the time.

"Pastor Schmid writes in his letters that finances were always a struggle which in later years caused a split between Bethlehem and the present Zion in 1875.

"A week after the first society was organized the Second German Evangelical Society was formed which is the Salem congregation of today.

"Salem may have held their first services in a schoolhouse. According to an old deed dated March 27,1835, Peter Schilling, Frederick Laubengayer and Jacob Stollsteimer, trustees of the Second Society, received from Jacob and Anna Paul, a parcel of land for $100, the present site, where they proceeded to build a frame church.

Meanwhile, Pastor Schmid had been staying with the Mann family where he became acquainted with their daughter, Sophia, and married her in 1834.

"Pastor Schmid's father-in-law built him a parsonage right across from the church. The Schmids lived there until 1849 and then moved into Ann Arbor.

"Zion Church had bought land at the corner of First and Washington Streets, now a parking lot. They started building a church in 1845 but because of financial problems it wasn't completed until four years later. They changed the name to Bethlehem.

"A city directory lists the Schmid family

as living on South Main Street. I'm not sure of the exact location.

"There were 12 children in the Schmid family, six boys and six girls. The oldest boy went on to become a pastor also and he was a teacher in the Columbus Seminary in the Ohio Synod.

"Pastor Schmid's father, one brother and two sisters also came in 1836. His father helped him as a lay pastor.

"Pastor Schmid started out with two churches but he would also go back to Detroit every five weeks to the congregation which developed into St. John's Evangelical Church and also to Monroe in 1833. By 1839 he was going eight different places. He eventually organized more than 20 churches, nine of them in Washtenaw County.

"The churches were all independent until 1843 when he organized his own synod which he called the Mission Synod. It disbanded four years later in a controversy with the Indian Mission in Frankenmuth. The Frankenmuth pastors joined the Missouri Synod which was just getting started in Chicago in 1847.

"He also lost his brother-in-law, pastor of Trinity Church in Monroe, who had married his sister.

"His churches then were independent until they joined the Ohio Synod in 1856. In 1860 he and two other pastors started the Michigan Synod.

"From 1833-1879 he wrote letters back to Basel. It's amazing what they had to do to survive. He had to contend with wolves, bears, rattlesnakes and mosquitos."

Rob showed a lantern similar to one Schmid carried as he walked through the woods. It was owned by Robert Schapler, archivist of the Lutheran Church in Michigan.

"People coming over would send Pastor Schmid money to buy land for them. A lot of times just the man would come and the family would follow later.

"So he was a land broker. He had his name on a lot of property. He also picked a spot for the number one tourist attraction in Michigan--Frankenmuth.

"He had to do more than preach at all these different churches. He was a mediator for arguments, he had to comfort the sick and be a country doctor if need be. His father who had been acquainted with herbal medicine helped him out.

"Pastor Schmid eventually organized more than 20 churches, some say 23, nine in Washtenaw.

"First was Zion which became Bethlehem, and Salem, 1833; Bethel Church in Freedom Township, 1840; St. Thomas Church in Freedom, 1842; St. John's in Bridgewater, 1854; and St. Paul's in Chelsea. He was preaching there in 1854 but it didn't get organized until 1865.

"Emmanuel Church, Ypsilanti, and St. John's of Northfield Township, were both organized in 1859; and Trinity Lutheran in Saline, 1865, (indirectly influenced by Schmid who had preached there in houses in the 1830s).

Photo by Mike Gerdenich

Tourgoers look over Salem Church Cemetery on Scio Church Road.

"He also organized at least 11 other churches all over southeastern Michigan as far as Saginaw and Marshall; St. Jacob's in Waterloo in Jackson County, 1841. He also influenced a Jackson City church and went over to Allegan County along Lake Michigan and started three small churches in 1858.

A son wrote, "To see how close to his heart his duty lay, he cared not only for German Protestants of Michigan but also a Swiss colony in Wisconsin called, wanting to obtain a pastor. He made every effort to obtain one including writing to the Basel Mission House.

"He was also concerned about German Protestants in Ohio and Wisconsin. He also was a teacher in the school and he instructed six men into the ministry."

For a while the Mission Synod had a seminary in Manchester to serve congregations in Michigan, Ohio and New York.

The oldest son wrote that his mother was a true helpmate. "The pastor's wife carried much responsibility. Many times the parsonage was nearly like a hotel, the difference being the guests were allowed to come without charge.

"Sometimes the parsonage was like a police station. As Father was absent so much Mother was called on to give advice in quarrels between husband and wife, parents and children, and between neighbors. If kind words and love did not remedy the matter it was explained what the law would do in such cases.

"When business transactions between Germans and Americans were made, Mother acted as interpreter as Father did not understand the English language sufficiently."

"He was minister of Salem Church until 1867. His last church was Bethlehem in Ann Arbor from which he retired in 1871 because of illness. He died in 1883 and is buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Ann Arbor.

"He was here for fifty years. He organized more than 20 congregations. He's the most amazing man that I have come across--the work he did, the people he helped.

"The letters he wrote are translated into English. They are titled, 'The Life and Labors of Frederick Schmid.'

"The brick Salem Church was built in 1871 according to the stone above the door."

Rob showed an early "collection plate"--a conical velvet bag on a long pole. People also paid rent for their pews in the old days, he noted.

Back on the bus, Ina noted that two years ago on a field trip to Sharon Township they mentioned diamond cut-outs in the gables of some old barns. They had only seen a few and only locally and one theory was they might be German.

Since then, they have learned they are found in the Frankenmuth area, all over southern Ontario and in Pennsylvania and New York.

"I'm beginning to think they are indicative of barns built in the mid-19th century."

In passing, she pointed out a farm that still has a lot of 19th century buildings. "Farms are evolving things. It is difficult to find one that kept to a previous time."

On Waters Road she pointed out the Diuble farm still run by Herbert Diuble, now in his mid-80s. The Diuble family came to Washtenaw in 1835.

Then she pointed out a barn with cupolas, typical of a 19th century barn in this area. Next noted was a farm recently bought by a young couple who are restoring some of the outbuildings.

"I have discovered that most of the prominent farms are on east-west roads. There are relatively fewer on north-south roads and what there are are smaller."

The bus turned left (south) on Parker Road. Freedom Township was on the right, Lodi on the left. Ina noted the Stierle farm on the left, in the family since 1830, but with a lot of newer buildings.

Rob Steward had stated earlier that between 1830 and 1850, five thousand German immigrants came to Washtenaw County. By 1890, Ina said, Freedom Township was virtually 100 percent German settlers.

"When they started to come in the 1830s they settled around Salem Church in the southwest quarter of Scio Township, then spilled over into Lodi and then moved south and west."

She noted a gambrel roof barn, typical of the early 20th century. Some were built as

early as the 1870s. Many gable roofs were replaced by gambrel roofs, giving more storage space for hay.

The bus passed the Diuble [Farm] Equipment and Feed Store complex on the left.

Sharon United Methodist Church at what is known as Rowe's Corners, Chelsea-Manchester Road (M-52) and Pleasant Lake Road, has a cemetery that is half German and half English. Five Rowe brothers once owned a lot of land nearby. Down the road was a school known as Rowe School, she said.

In Manchester the bus paused briefly in front of Emanuel United Church of Christ to read its historical marker. A typical late 19th century church, the brick building has Gothic elements and an Italianate style tower in the center front., she said.

ON TO BROOKLYN

The tour continued to Brooklyn in Jackson County. Tourgoers had time to wander through the Pine Tree Antique Mall before lunch at Michele's next door in the restored Brooklyn Hotel.

Michele sketched as much as they have been able to learn of the history of the hotel. Local records were destroyed when the town hall burnt twice, first a frame building, then a brick structure.

"As near as local historians can tell the hotel was built between 120 and 130 years ago as a hotel called the Cosmopolitan. It used to be a stage coach stop and post office. There was a livery stable in back.

"Upstairs there were originally 11 sleeping rooms and one bath room. For about a dollar a day rooms were available to men only for long-term rental.

"Originally, women could only come in the restaurant, not in the bar next door.

"There was a jewelry store in the building for a while, also a real estate business. The building had been vacant for 20 years and was supposed to be torn down and converted to a parking lot.

"At the last minute, three-and-a-half years ago, an attorney from a nearby community filed an injunction and halted its destruction. He decided to put a half million dollars into restoration and renovation. It is once again as it was before--a hotel and restaurant.

"Actually there are now two restaurants that complement each other, Michele's dining room on one side and, next door the Brooklyn Bistro for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

"In place of the livery stable in back we have added a French kitchen for baking and dessert preparation."

Michele took tourgoers upstairs to see a couple of the suites now available, furnished with period antiques. She invited those who wished to look at the banquet facility in the basement where they also have offices and a wine cellar.

Next the tour headed for Hanover, southwest of Jackson, passing near Clark Lake on the way.

Photo by Mike Gerdenich

Frances Hartman played several organs in organ museum at Hanover.

EVOLUTION AT CLARK LAKE

Professor Ted Ligibel of Eastern Michigan University, who helped guide tours to Sharon Township and the Maumee River Valley in previous years, is author of *Clark Lake: Images of a Michigan Tradition* which Ina passed around. Ligibel's family used to go to Clark Lake summers.

Ina pointed out the evolution of the area--in the old days it was farming country. The lake was incidental. Then in the late 19th and early 20th century people discovered the lake itself as a summer resort.

"People from Toledo, Jackson, even Cincinnati and Kentucky, would take the train to the lake, then get on a boat to go to one of the hotels on the lake or to cottages.

"They built cottages and summer homes facing the lake. Each area had its own name.

"I participated in a survey a few years ago and part of my area was called the Gold Coast. That is where a lot of wealthy Jackson families built their summer homes and they had huge lawns compared to the Toledo section on the east where they had small cottages almost on top of each other. A lot of the houses at the lake are now year-around residential.

"In the 1920s they built a pier and large dance hall, popular in the 1930s and '40s.

Photo by Susan Wineberg

1997 tour group poses in front of bus.

ON TO HANOVER

At Hanover, the tour visited the Lee Conklin Antique Organ Museum, where about 100 organs, mostly reed organs, are housed in the former Hanover School.

Ray Fletcher, the man who keeps the organs in operating condition, explained that Lee Conklin was a farmer who lived just south of town. After his wife died he was at loose ends and somebody gave him a reed organ.

"He worked on it. That was so much fun he started looking for others. After approximately 15 years of gathering up organs around southern Michigan, Ohio and Indiana, he decided he was going to have to leave the farm.

"One of the major problems was he had 73 reed organs in his hay barn, all fixed up and playable. He wanted to keep the collection intact.

"The community organized a historical society, negotiated a 49-year lease on the school building which was no longer in use and moved the organs in. That was in 1977, so our society has operated this museum 20 years.

"The collection has a wide variety of instruments. The ones against the wall with tall backs are parlor organs, designed to be located in the front parlor, available for special occasions such as family celebrations or when the preacher came to call.

"For family parties someone would play the organ and the family would gather round and sing hymns and other popular songs. It was the center of family entertainment.

"In the middle part of the room are a group of lower, flat-top instruments. They are the same instrument mechanically, they just don't have the top, some because it has been removed, others never had one.

"In the area immediately behind us are several organs where the back of the organ is decorated with cut out work and pressed wood. These are chapel organs, designed to be located in the sanctuary front, facing the congregation. Besides being decorative, the cut out work also provides better transmission of sound for the congregation.

"Scattered in the back of the room are several smaller instruments that usually have a shorter keyboard with fewer or no stops and single pedal operation instead of the dual pedal most reed organs have.

"Those are the melodeons that represent the first reed instruments manufactured in this country, starting about 1820. By about 1840 reed organs were being manufactured and the melodeons were less popular but they continued to be made and sold up to the 1920s.

"There are about 15 instruments that were made in Michigan including an Allmendinger organ from the Ann Arbor Organ Works.

"There are some ladies from the Allmendinger family who live in Ann Arbor who make it a point to come over here at least once a year," Fletcher said.

Told that an Allmendinger relative, Lita Ristine, was on the tour he welcomed her.

"These instruments were manufactured all across the northeastern part of our country. Many were made in Chicago but others were made in Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, New York and New England. One of the largest and longest operating companies was the Estey Organ Company of Brattleboro, Vermont, and we have a number of theirs here.

"There are three or four instruments I would like to call to your attention particularly. One on the stage has a set of bells that can be played along with the organ. Another had what looked like pipes but they were really just wooden poles for decoration.

"The 'pipe' organ was used in St. Joseph Catholic Church in Jackson until they built a new church in the middle 1960s.

"The first organ Lee acquired was a small instrument owned by a musical couple named Frank and Frances who traveled all around the community wherever there was a wedding, anniversary or birthday party or just a party for a party.

"Frances played the organ and Frank, the violin. Everybody in the community was familiar with it and it was the one that got Lee started into this whole business.

"In the back of the room we have a suitcase organ all folded up and carried in a suitcase. It was designed to be used for camp meetings and in military service. There's also a circuit rider organ that Lee rebuilt and plays very nicely.

"A more recent acquisition is a little organ designed to be used in kindergarten and Sunday School classes. One person can pick it up and carry it any place.

"In addition to the organs, the Hanover-Horton Historical Society has restored a classroom very much like it was in the early 1900s and in other rooms displays a number of local historical artifacts. There is a gift shop in the front hall.

"The original school building on the site was built in 1870. That burned in 1910 and was rebuilt to the original plan on the original foundation in 1911.

"In the 1930s when WPA projects were a popular way of making work and getting things done the gymnasium or all purpose room was added. Used bricks were hand cleaned and laid. Wainscoting from the Friend's Church was taken down and recycled here. The school was used up to the mid-1950s.

Frances Hartman then played such old favorite songs and hymns as "School Days," "Peggy O'Neil" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic" on several different organs.

ON TO JACKSON

The tour continued to Ella Sharp Museum in Jackson for a guided tour of the restored home.

"In the 1850s, a widow, Mary Wing Farnsworth, came from New York to visit a cousin. She had married in New York and had two children. Husband and children had all died of whatever was going around. Perhaps she came for a break or to make a new start.

"She found a house and land and went back to New York and told her father, Abraham Wing, about it. He had been investing in land here and he bought this particular piece of land for her use.

"She moved out here and married Dwight Merriman, also a native of New York, shortly after he had come to this area. Merriman worked in a bookstore, as a land agent and for Mary's father.

"The farm and house changed hands in 1855 and, in 1856, became the home of Dwight and Mary Merriman. In 1857 they had twins--Ella and Frank. Frank died of diphtheria when he was four years old. They had two other sons, Howard, born 1858, and Tracy born 1863.

"When they started their family they decided they needed to add onto the house. They added the front part in the then popular Greek Revival style.

"In the 1860s they added the five story tower in the more ornate Italianate style.

"The other two boys died while they were in their 20s, one from consumption, the other from an infection so Ella was the only remaining child of that family.

"In 1881 Ella married John C. Sharp. He too was a native of New York. His family had moved out to the Brooklyn area. He was a lawyer. He served as city attorney, prosecuting attorney and as superintendent of census takers. He also served a term in the state senate

"A couple of years after they were married the Sharps took over management of the farm and the Merrimans moved into town. Under both the Merrimans and Sharps it was a very prosperous farm and grew to about 800 acres.

"They had all kinds of farm animals--cows, sheep, pigs, turkeys, chickens and, of course, horses. They were noted for the cleanliness of their dairy.

"They also had orchards--1,000 apple, 1,000 peach and 500 pear trees--and maple trees. We still have a sugaring and shearing festival in the spring and tap maples around the old one-room schoolhouse for maple syrup.

"Ella and John didn't have any children. Mr. Sharp died in 1908. At that time, Ella put in her will for the house and property to go to the City of Jackson for a park and museum.

"She was very interested in civic organizations, club work, conservation. She was active in getting legislation to protect the forests, for reforestation and for fire prevention because that was a problem. So I think her giving her property is just another example of her caring for the community.

"She died in 1912. The park opened in 1916. It wasn't until the 1960s that a couple of groups got together and started to restore the house back to the late 1800s style. The museum opened in 1965.

"The park superintendent's family had lived in the house from 1916 to the early '60s so the house had been modernized. But when Ella died they shut off a couple of rooms and saved some of the furniture and all the papers--they even had a doctor bill for $7.50 for delivering the twins for instance--and a lot of letters. Mary did a lot of traveling abroad and would write letters home.

"It is believed the original house was built in the early 1840s and consisted only of the kitchen and dining room with a second floor sleeping loft.

"The kitchen stove is a Jewel stove from the Detroit Stove Company. It has a warming oven above and a hot water reservoir on the right.

"They formerly had an ice box. They harvested their own ice and stored it in an ice house between straw and sawdust. They had a pantry and an old Michigan basement where they could store apples and potatoes through the winter.

"China on the dining table and in the cabinet is Haviland china from France that Ella's mother purchased. It has the Merriman name engraved on each piece.

"An isinglass or mica wreath hangs on the wall, an example of bringing nature into the house. In the late 1800s they used a lot of fruit and flower patterns.

"The next room is the first floor of the tower, now furnished as a study with John's law books and other books they would have had in the cabinets.

"The ceiling is higher, the Italianate window treatment quite a bit different. In her later years Ella had used this as a bedroom, closet and bathroom. An original chair that belonged to the family is in the room.

"The parlor in the 1857 Greek Revival style addition is the fanciest room in the house and different from the study and next room to it. Most stuff in the parlor did belong to the family. The square grand piano belonged to Mary. The legs are huge. They support a heavy steel case. The settee and two arm chairs are wedding gifts to John and Ella from Ella's brother.

"The table in the middle with beautiful wood inlay work was from Bavaria and a table in the corner with marble was from Italy. Mary liked to travel abroad and pick up souvenirs. Ella went with her on a couple of occasions.

"Except for the portrait of Dwight Merriman most of the other art work in the room the women picked up in their travels.

"Across the hall is a little more casual living room. Upstairs are four bedrooms and a sewing room and on the third floor is a toy room, all open for viewing. It was then quite common to have a sewer or dressmaker come and make clothes for the family and then move on."

AN ECONOMIST LOOKS AT FORD VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

"In any biography of Henry Ford or Ford Motor Company the big story is always the Highland Park and Rouge plants.

"They employed the most people. They produced the cars. They were the plants that tended to initiate the whole era of mass production.

"Ford's village industries are often thought of by historians as a sort of idiosyncratic hobby of Henry Ford. If there is anything about them in the biographies it is mentioned in a footnote," Professor Bruce Pietrykowski of the University of Michigan-Dearborn, told the WCHS May audience.

He spoke at the annual meeting held at the former Ford mill at Macon, now owned by Joe and Karen O'Neal and Hank Bednarz.

He titled his talk, "Looking Forward Through The Rear View Mirror: Ford's Village Industries." Actually, there was a book published with that title but I came up with it first," he said.

"We don't think much about these tiny plants in the countryside.

"I'm an economist by training. As an economist we collect a lot of data, crunch a lot of numbers and sort of extract from the real lives of people who were working in the plant.

"The more I got involved in researching the history of production at Ford Motor Company I realized there are some fascinating records that historians haven't really looked at because of where they are located.

"People are familiar with Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village and they have a research center there. Access to those records is fairly open.

"The records I am talking about are in the private industrial archives of Ford Motor Company. To gain access to those you really have to explain what your research project is and what you intend to do with the material you find.

"As an economist I was given relatively easy entry because what I wanted to do, at least initially, was collect data--hard numbers--on wages and job tenure. The names and backgrounds of the people weren't that important to me.

"As I got more and more involved I found a lot of personal history and a lot of labor relations history that I wanted to explore, so I have moved from economics to focusing more on the workers and their particular relationship on the shop floor--why they worked at Ford, why they got fired, why they quit.

"I think by understanding those relations in the plant at a very personal level we can also understand what is going on today on shop floors throughout the country. In other words, people haven't changed that much.

"Some of the things I am going to talk about today suggest that we are revisiting some of the issues that made the village industries such an important but overlooked experiment in industrial relations.

"The mass production plants are still around today. You have these huge machines that cost millions of dollars and back in the 'teens and '20s the machines cost tantamount to millions of dollars.

"They are used to make high quantity. Think of the Model T. The old story about the Model T was it was available in any color as long as it was black. Mass production involved large quantities of similar product, standardized. There were no options on the Model T, unlike today.

"Those plants employed unskilled or semi-skilled labor. They didn't need a high school education to work in auto plants back in the 'teens and '20s.

"The Rouge plant had vertical integration of production. The story is that raw materials went in at one end and at the other end came out a finished car. That was supposedly the hallmark of American capitalist mass production.

"Today, some people will say that era is gone.

"The River Rouge plant was an industrial city if you will, a small city under one roof." He showed a picture of it with its many smokestacks.

"The Rouge was talked about in literature and photographed. It was one of the first modern factories actually depicted by artists. The Rouge is important.

"At the same time the Rouge was mass producing autos, Henry Ford was saying we need to think about industrial decentralization. We need to think about moving jobs out of these big factories and into the countryside.

"That was strange because the whole idea was that centralized production was more efficient. Why would Ford say this when everybody else was saying mass production was the greatest thing that ever happened. It was a model for other industries, other countries.

"It's a puzzle. Historians often like puzzles and exceptions to the rule. That set me off to investigate a little more about village industries.

"They are all along rivers. They all use hydro-electric or water power to generate electricity. That limited the size of the plant and type of production.

"I went to the archives to locate records of these plants. I looked most carefully at Nankin Mills, Newburg, Plymouth, Phoenix, Waterford and Northville.

"Between 1920 and 1925 five village industry plants opened to produce parts. This production was moved out of Highland Park or the Rouge. If workers lived in Detroit they could transfer. If workers didn't take the offer, Ford would have to hire local residents. They would be trained by people working in the plant.

"A second wave of development of village industry plants was initiated in 1932 with the Ypsilanti plant, if you can call it a village industry. The plants employed any where from 12 to several hundred. Ypsilanti was one of the larger ones, Nankin Mills, one of the smallest.

"They manufactured valves at Northville, precision gauges at Waterford which was highly skilled work.

"Ford's original goal was to provide farmers with seasonal employment during their off season. The idea was they would be working in the factory when they weren't planting and harvesting.

"As it turned out the pay at these plants was pretty good and the workers gave up their farming jobs if they weren't farm owners.

"The Dundee plant made welding tips. Ford built a little classroom on the second floor for workers who wanted to gain extra skills in mathematics, blueprint reading, drafting and trigonometry.

"The notion was that workers would need to upgrade their skills in order to continue to produce those and other parts. The plant contained access to what we think of today as flexible production, the worker who can be retrained.

"We've heard stories that the worker of the future will have, five, six or seven jobs throughout his lifetime and will have to go to school several different times for supplementary skills.

"One of my favorite plants is the Phoenix Plant because it shatters a lot of myths.

"The Phoenix Plant, started in 1922, produced half of Ford's supply of generator cut outs, voltage regulators and stop light switches.

"It employed an almost entire female work force and by 1935 employed 92 women. It remained in production until the late 1940s. There might have been a male employed as a janitor, there might have been a male truck driver but that was about it.

"Females working in auto plants--that's unusual. Often females were not hired in auto plants, or if they were, they were segregated into certain sectors like upholstery.

"It just so happened that you find a lot of women in upholstery because, according to the literature, their hand-eye coordination was such that they had the necessary dexterity to operate the sewing machine.

"A Canadian historian has looked at Ford employment and notes that men at Ford were employed in upholstery and talks about how men redefined that job as masculine.

"*The Ford Times* ran a whole series of articles on the village industry plants. Coil winding was supposed to be a job at which women excelled. But at the same time there were plants in Brooklyn and Milan where coil winding was done by men 'because it was an exacting job.' Depending on who did it the adjectives followed.

"The other thing we think we knew about women in the auto industry is that they were employed at lower wages than men, just like basically every other industry. In the case of the Phoenix plant that is not quite true.

"Phoenix women were paid on average more than male manufacturing workers from 1922 until roughly the Great Depression. Then, in the Depression, women's wages fell in comparison to skilled manufacturing but they rebounded a little bit in 1940.

"You might say that was the auto indus-

try, anybody in the auto industry was doing well compared to other manufacturers. But I have other data that show even when you compare Phoenix women to auto workers, they had very high wages.

"You could say that has to do with Ford Motor Company, the preeminent auto manufacturer of the time. Everybody knows about the $5 day in 1914. Ford paid high wages.

"But the real value was eroding by 1916 so that even the $6 day did not buy what $5 bought in 1914. So it was a short-lived experiment but it got Ford a lot of publicity.

"In the 'teens Ford didn't have to advertise. He got lots of free publicity, lots associated with the $5 day, lots generated by the cult of Henry Ford. Everything Henry Ford did got publicity.

"Northville, the first village industry, which opened in 1920, employed almost entirely men. They used the same production techniques as Phoenix--an assembly line where workers sat on benches and a conveyor belt went past them and they added parts.

"Women didn't start out very well in 1922, in terms of hourly wages, 59 cents an hour, while Northville men were getting 74 cents an hour, but the gap closes and, after 1925, they were fairly comparable. In some years, Phoenix women were paid more than Northville men.

"In the 1930s we see a divergence again. Ford paid high wages to this particular group of women so these were good jobs.

"The Phoenix plant stayed in operation from 1922 through the 1940s, a relatively long period of time.

"I suggest that Henry Ford created a system of shop floor relations that in many ways was predicated on the family. There was one floor person I call Mrs. White. She was sort of like Mom. She was the only supervisor in that plant ever--she was there at the beginning and she was there at the end.

"She hired every woman personally. She fired. She found out what you were doing both on and off the job. She had her ways of monitoring you.

"Did Northville men have the same sort of supervision? No way! If they got drunk and went to jail it might be noted on their employment record. They might be fired but then again they might not.

"There was a marriage bar at Phoenix, only single women need apply. If you got married you had to quit. The number one reason for women quitting a job at Ford was to marry.

"Productivity and morality were monitored both on and off the job. Whom you associated with, if you were a woman, was very, very important. The notion was that if you were going to have a job at Ford you were also going to have to obey some sort of moral standards.

"Many of you have heard of the Sociological Department at Ford Motor Company where teams of investigators were sent to homes of workers at Highland Park to make sure that their houses were orderly and clean, there was no evidence of alcohol. Perhaps there was a Bible prominently displayed and evidence of church-going activity.

"The Sociological Department lasted into the late teens or early '20s. The effect of the Sociological Department was still going on at Phoenix.

"Mrs. White didn't enter your home but she asked the shopkeeper how much credit you had outstanding, perhaps what you were buying and who you were buying it for.

"Family relations were reproduced on the shop floor. It was sort of like Mom or a busybody aunt you don't quite like to know all your business.

"Women got high wages but they paid a higher price than men. Isn't Mrs. White's real job to make sure that the voltage regulators got produced and were of high quality and fit the Model T's and Model A's that were being produced?

"Why should she worry about the moral conduct of her workers unless, indeed, she was acting in such a way as to produce a family relationship on the shop floor that had the result of making sure that workers worked hard.

"I just heard on National Public Radio on the way here someone commenting on an author's thesis that people see work as a close, warm family relationship and home as more like work. At work people celebrate your birthday and you can chat at the water cooler about the game last night.

"But when you go home you have to clean the house, feed the babies, make dinner. You are exhausted. To some extent that's true.

"The age range of Phoenix workers was:
Under 20 years, 26%
20-24, 39%
25-29, and over 29, about one-third.

"I was a little bit surprised because of the notion that Ford would hire single women and younger women. By and large he did but there were still about one third of the women 25 or older.

"A strange thing about Mrs. White--I've looked and looked and I can't find her employment record. She might have taken it with her.

"Ford personnel records are in envelopes. The envelopes are in boxes, 200 or more envelopes per box, two rows wide. There are several hundred boxes. They include records of all workers--at Highland Park, the Rouge, any other plants, the iron mines in the Upper Peninsula, tug boats, iron ore ships.

"They are all in together in alphabetical order, not by plant. There are roughly a million or more Ford workers and I needed to find the village industry workers. How do you find a needle in a haystack?

"If you pick 100 randomly you are going to find 98 Rouge or Highland Park workers. The village industry workers are a small percent of the total.

"My research assistant and I noticed the workers addresses were on the back of the envelopes so we went by the addresses--if it was Northville or Plymouth or Macon chances are they were village industry workers.

"We went through and pulled out all by address of that kind. We missed some I'm sure but by and large we got a good sample.

"I want to bring three cases about Phoenix women to light.

"Case 1: A 31-year-old widow with one child. She was previously employed in an auto parts factory, not Ford, but for a competitor. She hired on at Phoenix in 1923 and was there six years, then dismissed.

"She was dismissed not because she was married but, according to Mrs. White, after a thorough investigation it was found that this woman was giving her hard-earned money to a very worthless man who was living off her pay.

"We warned her of the consequences if she continued. She continued and was fired. That seems fairly strong.

"Case 2: A 22-year-old woman, separated, with one child, was hired in 1925. She worked as a bench hand. (A bench hand is somebody who works at the bench in front of the conveyor.) She worked for two years, then quit because her husband returned.

"In 1930 she asked to be rehired because her husband left her, now with three children. That information is in the supervisor's report along with the declaration, 'We will not consider taking her back.' Wow, that's pretty rough.

"In both of these cases refusal to rehire is linked to behavior outside of work. The attempt to maintain this culture of moral behavior came to be more important than hiring productive workers. This was also brought to mind very much in the third case.

"Case 3: A 25-year-old single woman with no dependents hired on to work at Phoenix in 1923. She began as a bench hand and moved on to claim a more skilled job, that of calibrating.

"She was laid off in October 1931 but rehired one week later. She was dismissed in 1933 because it was discovered she had married.

"Mrs. White relates the facts of the case as follows: Didn't quit when married but returned to work. Learned of marriage June 13,1933, through anonymous letter.

"When questioned she didn't deny it. She said she didn't quit because her marriage was such a failure. He has left her twice and doesn't contribute as he should to her support. Outside of breaking this rule we have no complaint against this girl. She is one of our best and most intelligent workers.

"This is one of their best workers who just happened to be in a bad marriage , whose husband has left her and isn't contributing to her support. It seems to me that if ever rules were meant to be broken this might well be one of those cases.

"But Mrs. White had to uphold this moral code and she fired this worker.

"So not only was work in these village industries part of the mass production system. It also gives us a glimpse into the real nature of work and personnel relations at work and the fact that personal life and work life often times were not separable.

"People say about their employment at the Rouge, 'Knowing you were wearing a Rouge badge was a status symbol in certain parts of the community.'

(continued on page 8)

AN ECONOMIST LOOKS AT FORD *(continued from page 7)*

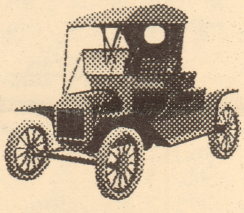
"Just like information at work was used, in the broader community, so information in the broader communities was used, either in your favor or against you at work, as in the case of the Phoenix plant.

"The village industries are one case where the small rural community housing manufacturing concerns made very clear the blurring of boundaries between work and home and I think we still have that today.

"It's important to realize that arbitrary use of power can be made to influence one's job prospects, if that's a bad thing, but is it a thing of the past? I don't think so.

"One can look, not so much at the private sector, but at the public sector, taking the case of the court martial trial where one's behavior off base obviously influences the rule that we have to enforce.

"Having lived in this area and having access to the history of the village industry plants we can really provide ourselves with a sense of what the meaning of work is, what the meaning of corporate America is and how, when we talk about changes in the corporate world, looking backward can help us understand where we're going. I think the village industries are a case in point."



Editor: Alice Ziegler, 663-8826
Address: 537 Riverview Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Mailing: Pauline Walters, 663-2379
WCHS Office: (313) 662-9092
Published September-May, except December, January.

ART FAIR ACTIVITIES RAISE $1,200 FOR WCHS

Thanks to Great Lakes National Bank for letting us use their parking lots after hours and 26 WCHS volunteers the Society raised $1,200 during the Art Fair in July.

Photo by Karen O'Neal

Dick Dunn ready for business at Art Fair.

Peter Rocco again organized the parking activities and Pauline Walters scheduled the workers for parking and staffing our table of gift shop items at Kempf House. Thanks, too, to Kempf House for letting us share their space.

Helping with parking were: Jay Snyder, Elsie Dyke, Rosemarion Blake, Patty Creal, Ina Hanel, Mike Gerdenich, Karen O'Neal, Dick Dunn, Doug Kelley, Karen Simpson, Fran Wright, Grace Shackman, Duane Rorabacher, Lars Bjorn and Susan Wineberg.

Helping at Kempf House were: Kerry Adams, Elizabeth Dusseau, Esther Warzynski, Pat Austin, Patty Creal, Dorothy Wilkins, Bets Hansen, Ginny Hills and Alice Ziegler.

APOLOGIES

Your befuddled editor correctly credited J. F. Ervin Foundation as co-sponsor of the May 1977 *Impressions* on page 8 but incorrectly listed that benefactor as Ervin Industries on page 7.

CERTIFICATES OFFERED

Hand-lettered certificates, framed if desired, are offered free of charge, by WCHS to organizations, businesses, churches, schools etc., for milestone anniversaries. Information: 663-8826.

HOW TO JOIN

Send name, address and phone number with check or money order payable to WCHS Membership, c/o Patty Creal, Treasurer, P.O. Box 3336, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336.

Annual dues are individual, $15; couple/family, $25; student or senior (60+), $10; senior couple, $19; business/association, $50; patron, $100. Information: 662-9092.

This issue of the *Washtenaw Impressions* is co-sponsored by: *Dahlmann Properties 300 S. Thayer; Environmental Research Institute of Michigan (ERIM) 3300 Plymouth Road; and University Microfilms (UMI) 300 N. Zeeb Road, all Ann Arbor.*

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-3336

**Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 96
Ann Arbor, MI**

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

'FAKE, FRAUD OR GENUINE?'

2 p.m. • Sunday September 21, 1997

ANDREWS RESTORATION
(behind Marathon Station)
789 W. Michigan Avenue
Saline, Michigan

address correction request

YPSILANTI MUSEUM
220 N HURON ST
YPSILANTI MI 48197-2516